

A STUDY OF THE FICTION AND NON-FICTION BORROWED
BY THE ADULT PATRONS OF THE WEST HUNTER
BRANCH PUBLIC LIBRARY
ATLANTA, GEORGIA ✓

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 1926, Charles H. Compton of the St. Louis Public Library began a series of essays on the types of people in terms of sex and occupations who read the works of six selected authors. Though limited in scope, Mr. Compton's investigations indicated how circulation data might be used to identify specific borrowers of specific books.¹

In 1933, Douglas Waples began an investigation of five New York branch libraries. He did a rather thorough job of identifying the borrowers of specific types of library reading materials, again describing them in terms of sex and occupations.²

Bernard Berelson in 1949 completed The Library's Public, one of the reports resulting from the Public Library Inquiry conducted by the Social Science Research Council. Mr. Berelson summarized the outstanding research studies dealing with the identification of library users in terms of age, sex, occupational characteristics, marital status, economic status,

¹Charles H. Compton, Who Reads What? (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1935), p. iii.

²Douglas Waples, "Community Studies in Reading, I. Reading in the Lower East Side", Library Quarterly, III (January, 1933), 1-20.

residence, opinion and community leadership. He found that although the clientele of the library had been well-described, very little had been done to combine the known data concerning the users of the public library with the kinds of books circulated.¹

Purpose and Scope

In an age of widespread literacy, increased leisure time, and civic responsibilities, the public library was conceived and developed to provide ready and free access to books for all members of the community.² Because the characteristics of the clientele are unique in every community, it seemed valuable to find out who in terms of age, sex, occupation, and educational status actually borrowed books from the West Hunter Branch Library, and what kinds of books were borrowed.

Significance

This study high lights patterns in the reading habits of library patrons that branch librarians in similar communities might use as guides in setting up a realistic program of book selection.

Definition of Terms

In this study "adult" means a registered library borrower over 15 years of age. "Patron" has reference to the

¹Bernard Berelson, The Library's Public (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), p. 68.

²Ibid., p. 4.

registered adult borrower who used the circulation services of the library during the time interval covered by the study.

Methodology

The procedures for collecting the data for this study were similar to the techniques used by Leon Carnovsky in his study of the public library of Hinsdale, Illinois.¹ The author, title, and class number (if non-fiction) of every book borrowed from the adult collection, of the West Hunter Branch Library, together with the borrower's registration number were copied on a card. A separate card was used for each book. The borrowers were then identified through the registration file, and the following information was recorded on each card: name, occupation, and sex.

Because the registration card did not contain any definite indication of age nor educational status, the data for these characteristics were secured by using a brief questionnaire (See Appendix A). This questionnaire was given to the patrons when a book was checked out. The patrons were requested to return the questionnaire when they returned their book(s).

These procedures were followed daily from February 20, 1956 through March 17, 1956, a period of four weeks. The interval of time covered by this study represented "a peak

¹Leon Carnovsky, "Community Studies in Reading, II. Hinsdale, a Suburb of Chicago", Library Quarterly, V (January, 1935), 1-30.

period of the year for library borrowing".¹ Consequently a representative picture of the library's circulation patterns was obtained for a peak period.

Brief History and Description of the Library

The Atlanta Public Library is an outgrowth of a small subscription library for young men organized in 1867. Mr. Andrew Carnegie donated the funds for the first building which was located on the corner of Forsyth Street and Carnegie Way. Construction was started in 1899, and the library was ready for service early in 1902. The library was re-organized and remodeled in 1949. Since July 1, 1949 under the leadership of the present Director, the title of the head of the library has been changed from that of "Librarian" to that of "Director of Public Libraries of Atlanta and Fulton County". At the same time the name of the library was changed from "Carnegie Library of Atlanta" to "Atlanta Public Library". The Atlanta Public Library is responsible for all library services to the city and Fulton County, and it functions through a main library with a bookmobile, and 17 branches, three of which serve Negroes exclusively. The library is currently organized into the following departments: Catalog, Children's, Circulation, Extension, Fulton County Division, Fine Arts-Audio-Visual, Negro Service, Order, Reference,

¹Interview with Mrs. A. W. McPheeters, Librarian, West Hunter Branch Public Library, Atlanta, Georgia, February 17, 1956.

Business and Industry Division, Group Service Office, Stack Unit, Maintenance and Custodial, and the Margaret Mitchell Room.¹

The present Negro Service Department is operated similar to the plan formerly used by the Louisville Free Public Library in Kentucky:

This type of departmental organization is perhaps of special significance in that the department is rated above the level of ordinary branches, with the main Negro branch acting in the capacity of headquarters for Negro service in both city and county.²

The West Hunter Branch Library was opened to the public on December 8, 1949.³ It is located at the intersection of Morris Brown Drive and West Hunter Street, South West, in a residential area predominantly settled by Negroes. Three blocks north of the library is Washington High School, and two blocks further north there is a shopping and business district which is for the most part owned and/or operated by Negroes. An elementary school is also in this area. Another elementary school is located about seven blocks west of the library. Five colleges serving Negro students predominantly are within a mile of the library.

The library is a modern functional building; the main

¹Atlanta Public Library, Staff Manual (Atlanta: The Library, 1955), pp. 1-10.

²Eliza A. Gleason, The Southern Negro and the Public Library (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941), p. 23.

³Atlanta Daily World, December 8, 1949.

floor is divided into an adult reading area, a children's area, a browsing corner, and a special room which is used for a collection of materials by and about Negroes. The browsing corner contains a radio-television-phonograph combination. The charging desk is situated near the main entrance, providing adequate supervision of all reading areas at all times.

According to the Committee on Library Architecture and Building Planning the library building has good architectural features:

The total floor area is 4,570 square feet including a small assembly room and staff facilities.

The staff has a small lounge, a small kitchen, and a dinette.

A separate entrance to the meeting room will permit its use after library hours.

Steel windows that open out are provided above the book shelving. Spaced along opposite walls are floor-to-ceiling aluminum windows. Floors inside are concrete with battleship linoleum covering, walls are plastered and ceilings are acoustical tile. Lighting throughout is indirect incandescent...¹

The only adverse architectural feature is "two steps necessary at the main entrance to reach the public space".² The cost of the building was \$65,000 exclusive of land³ and it has a book capacity of over 12,000 volumes.

Currently there are three Negro branch libraries

¹American Library Association, Committee on Library Architecture and Building Planning, Building for Small Public Libraries, (Chicago: American Library Association, 1950), p. 6-7.

²Ibid.

³Atlanta Daily World, June 12, 1949.

serving the 134,700 Negroes in the city of Atlanta,¹ with the West Hunter Branch operating as the main Negro branch. The combined book collection in these three branches is 32,490 volumes.² The combined number of registered adult borrowers is 4,740; of this number 2,708 or 57 percent are registered at the West Hunter Branch Public Library.³

There are 12,363 volumes housed in the West Hunter Branch Library. Non-fiction books totaling 8,155 volumes represent 66 percent of the total book collection. Eighteen percent, or 2,217 of these volumes are juvenile non-fiction and reference books. The remaining 5,938 volumes, or 48 percent of the total collection are general reference and non-fiction books for adults. The fiction collection contains 4,208 volumes or 34 percent of the total book collection. The largest number of fiction books, some 2,530 volumes representing 20 percent of the complete collection is in the juvenile area. The adult fiction collection includes 1,678 volumes representing 14 percent of the total book collection (see Table 1).

In addition to the Librarian of the West Hunter Branch (who is also given the title "Director of Negro Library Service"), three other persons are employed: one professional

¹U. S. Bureau of the Census, Georgia: Population, 1950, p. 10.

²Anne McPheeters, Annual Statistical Report of Library Activities in the Auburn, University Homes, and West Hunter Branches of the Atlanta Public Library for the Year Ending December 31, 1955 (Atlanta: West Hunter Branch, 1956), p. 1.

³Ibid.

librarian, one non-professional library assistant, and a part-time page, who is a college student.

TABLE 1

WEST HUNTER BRANCH LIBRARY BOOK COLLECTION

	Non-Fiction		Fiction		Total	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Adult Books	5938	48	1678	14	7616	62
Juvenile Books	2217	18	2530	20	4747	38
Total	8155	66	4208	34	12,363	100

The second chapter of this study will discuss the characteristics of the adult borrowers of the West Hunter Branch in terms of sex, age, occupation, and educational status; chapter three will analyze the various groups who borrowed fiction from the library, isolating the major users of the non-fiction book collection of the library will be the concern of chapter four, and chapter five will summarize the findings and point out implications for librarians that were revealed in this study.

CHAPTER II

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ADULT PATRONS IN RELATION TO CIRCULATION

According to Bernard Berelson, the public library has no "public" as such but serves several distinctive groups which make distinctive demands for library materials.¹ In each community these groups vary according to the composition of the population living in a given area and/or community. During the period of this study from February 20, 1956 through March 17, 1956, a total of 1,190 books were circulated to adults; 1,187 were borrowed by the adult patrons of the library, and three were inter-library loans to the other Negro branch libraries.

The variation in circulation from day to day throughout the four-week period was decidedly pronounced; however, there was slight similarity to the circulation of the corresponding day in successive weeks (see Table 2). The discernible circulation pattern indicated a higher circulation of books on Monday, Tuesday, and Saturday, with the slack periods in circulation occurring during the mid-week on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. Because of a legal holiday,

¹Berelson, op. cit., p. 133.

the library closed on Wednesday during the first week that this study was in progress, however, a count of the Wednesday adult circulation for the week preceding, and the week following the study revealed no differences in circulation figures that would change the apparent circulation pattern for that day of the week. For the first two weeks circulation was steady with a sharp increase occurring during the third and fourth weeks caused in part by assignments at some of the nearby schools, and preparation for spring gardens and a flower show in the local community. This was evident by an increase in the number of books on gardening and flower arranging checked out during this period.

TABLE 2

CIRCULATION BY DAYS FOR FOUR-WEEK PERIOD

Week	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Total
First	74	47	...	67	34	40	262
Second	45	47	52	41	40	40	265
Third	75	72	39	34	59	65	344
Fourth	49	80	48	38	24	80	319
Total	243	246	139	180	157	225	1,190

Sex

During the course of this study 415 individual adults used the library; 242 or 58 per cent were women, and 173 or 42 per cent were men. Together they borrowed a total of 1,187 books. Loans to women numbered 743, representing 63 per cent of all loans made and 444 loans comprising 37 per cent of the total loans were made to men. The per capita

loans for women were three books, and the men averaged two and one half books per person. The per capita loans for both men and women were approximately two and one half books (see Table 3).

TABLE 3

SUMMARY OF LOANS BY SEX OF BORROWER

	Women	Men	Both
Total number of loans.....	742	445	1,187
Per cent of total loans.....	63	37	100
Total number of borrowers...	242	173	415
Per cent of total borrowers.	58	42	100
Per capita loans.....	3.07	2.57	2.86

Occupations

Occupations in this study have been divided into 11 categories: Student, Professional, Semi-professional, Housewife, Clerical and Sales, Personal-service, Public-service, Skilled, Semi-skilled, Unskilled, and Unknown.

Students comprised the largest segment of the adult patrons using the library. There were 239 students, representing 20.4 per cent of all borrowers. Persons employed in clerical and sales positions represented four per cent of both men and women borrowers (see Table 4).

It is significant to observe that only nine per cent of the women borrowers were housewives as contrasted to the 22.3 per cent doing professional work (see Table 4). These

figures indicate that a large proportion of the West Hunter Branch Public Library's female clientele are gainfully employed outside the home, a situation that is contrary to the findings of both Carnovsky¹ and Berelson,² but is in keeping with Frazier's findings which indicated that nearly a third of Negro wives and mothers were gainfully employed outside the home.³

TABLE 4
OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT PATRONS

Occupation	Women		Men		Both	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Students	142	59.0	97	56	239	57.0
Professional	54	22.3	31	18	85	20.4
Semi-professional	2	0.8	5	3	7	1.9
Housewife	22	9.0	..	..	22	5.0
Clerical and Sales	9	3.7	6	3	15	4.0
Personal-service	5	2.0	5	3	10	2.4
Public-service	..	..	11	7	11	3.0
Skilled	..	..	2	1	2	0.5
Semi-skilled	..	..	10	6	10	2.4
Unskilled	4	1.6	4	2	8	2.0
Unknown	4	1.6	2	1	6	1.4
Total	242	100	173	100	415	100

Personal-service and semi-skilled occupations were equally represented (2.4 per cent each) among the adult patrons.

¹Carnovsky, op. cit., Table II, p. 8.

²Berelson, op. cit., p. 30.

³E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Family in the United States (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), Table 18, p. 592.

Occupations for 1.4 per cent of all the adult borrowers were unknown, while skilled laborers represented less than one per cent of all borrowers (see Table 4).

The majority of students who used the library were enrolled in local high schools. Washington High School which is very near the library, had the largest representation with 95 or 39.9 per cent of all the student patrons and Turner High School had 24 students comprising 10 per cent of the student patrons. On the college level, Clark College had the largest representation with 28 men and women students representing 12 per cent of the student patrons. Atlanta University and Morris Brown College each accounted for 3.5 per cent of all student patrons. The category "unknown" was used to designate those students who registered as such on the library registration card but did not indicate the schools in which they were enrolled. This category accounted for 15.8 per cent of all student borrowers (see Table 5).

The distribution of circulation among occupational groups was similar in rank to their representation among borrowers. Students and professionals ranked first and second respectively in number of books borrowed, and housewives and the clerical and sales employees ranked third and fourth respectively in the number of books borrowed. The semi-professionals who accounted for 1.9 per cent of the total number of borrowers and the semi-skilled employees both ranked seventh in the number of books borrowed (see Table 6).

TABLE 5
STUDENT PATRONS OF THE LIBRARY BY
SCHOOL AND SEX

School	Women	Men	Both	Per Cent
High Schools				
Booker T. Washington	63	32	95	39.9
George W. Carver	1	..	1	.4
H. M. Turner	17	7	24	10.0
David T. Howard	3	..	3	1.2
L. Price	..	2	2	0.8
Oglethorpe	2	1	3	1.2
Colleges and University				
Clark College	18	10	28	12.0
Morehouse College	..	20	20	8.0
Spelman College	6	..	6	2.9
Morris Brown College	5	4	9	3.7
Gammon Seminary	1	..	1	0.4
Atlanta University	3	6	9	3.7
Unknown	23	15	38	15.8
Total	142	97	239	100

Educational Status

One hundred and twenty-one patrons representing 29 per cent of the 415 persons who borrowed books from the West Hunter Branch Library during the four-week period filled out and returned questionnaires. An analysis of these questionnaires tends to present a representative sample of the educational status of the patrons who use the West Hunter Branch Library.

Over 46 or 39 per cent of the patrons who returned questionnaires had from one to four years of college training (see Table 7). The comparatively large number of patrons in this category reflects to a significant degree the educational

attainment of the college students who used the library. Patrons who returned questionnaires indicating the completion of ninth and tenth grades numbered only six, representing 4.5 per cent of the questionnaires returned. Considering the large proportion of high school students who used the library at the time of this study (see Table 5), this is an extremely low representation. Some 21 or 18 per cent of the patrons returning questionnaires were college graduates, and the same number and percentage had done one year of study beyond college. A relatively high proportion of these patrons, some 12 per cent, have done two years of work beyond their college training (see Table 7).

TABLE 6
DISTRIBUTION OF CIRCULATION BY OCCUPATIONS.

Occupation	Rank	Number of Books Borrowed
Student	1	605
Professional	2	356
Housewife	3	69
Clerical and Sales	4	38
Personal-service	5	30
Public-service	6	25
Semi-professional	7	17
Semi-skilled	7	17
Unknown	8	15
Unskilled	9	11
Skilled	10	4
Total		1,187

The category "unknown" accounts for the seven patrons who returned questionnaires but did not include their library

registration numbers making it impossible to identify them by sex.

TABLE 7
EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF THE ADULT PATRONS

Amount of Formal Education	Women	Men	Unknown	Total	Per Cent
Completed ninth and tenth grades	5	1	..	6	4.5
Graduated from High School	2	2	1	5	4.0
Special study beyond High School	1	..	..	1	0.5
Between one and four years of college	26	17	3	46	39.0
Graduated from college	14	6	1	21	18.0
One year study beyond college	13	8	..	21	18.0
Between two and three years of study beyond college	11	3	..	14	12.0
Between three and five years of study beyond college	2	3	2	7	4.0
Total	74	40	7	121	100

Age

The 121 questionnaires that were returned revealed that 47 or 39 per cent of the library patrons fell into the 21-29 age group. This age bracket is representative of the college and university students and young professional persons. The 30-44 age group accounted for 31 per cent of the

patrons who returned questionnaires, indicating that this age group uses the West Hunter Branch Library more than similar age groups in the studies which were summarized by Berelson.¹ However, Berelson's finding that "the public library attracts a progressively smaller proportion of people in each successive higher age level"² holds true for the patrons using the Hunter Street Library, since the 45-59 age bracket, the next highest level, represented only 11.5 per cent of all age groups (see Table 8).

TABLE 8
AGE GROUPS OF THE ADULT PATRONS

Age	Women	Men	Unknown	Total	Per Cent
15 - 20	15	4	2	21	18.0
21 - 29	23	20	4	47	39.0
30 - 44	24	13	1	38	31.0
45 - 59	11	3	..	14	11.5
60 or over	1	..	..	1	0.5
Total	74	40	7	121	100

The small number of high school students who filled out and returned questionnaires is clearly revealed when the number and percentage is noted for the 15-20 age bracket. Since high school students represented the largest numerical occupational group (57 per cent) it is assumed that they

¹Berelson, op. cit., Table 6, p. 23.

²Ibid.

should be represented with more than 21 persons or 18 per cent of all borrowers returning questionnaires.

Summary

Over a four-week period the discernible pattern of circulation for the West Hunter Branch Public Library indicated that Monday, Tuesday, and Saturday are peak circulation days.

The patrons of the library are representative of the following characteristics:

1. More women than men use the library.
2. Students are the principle occupational group served by the library with persons in professional occupations being the next largest group of users. A large percentage of the women patrons are employed outside the home.
3. The educational status of the patrons is high, with the majority currently enrolled in high school, and/or having had one to four years of college training.
4. The majority of the library's patrons being students, fall in the 15-20 age bracket; however, as indicated by the figures given on the returned questionnaire, college students and young professionals falling in

the 21-29, and 30-44 age brackets respectively
are the predominant patrons of the library.

Chapter III will analyze the types of fiction borrowed by the adult patrons according to occupation and sex.

CHAPTER III

THE FICTION BORROWED BY THE ADULT PATRONS

Webster's dictionary defines fiction as an imaginary prose tale in which characters and actions professing to represent those of real life are portrayed in a plot.¹ In the world of literature today it is clear that fiction "presents almost every kind of literature that formerly required separate and distinctive literary forms".² The domain and functions of modern fiction are without limits:

Fiction records, mirrors, interprets, every aspect of modern life, its activities, surroundings, interests, convictions, ideals, and problems. From religion to hotel management every conceivable subject furnishes a theme to the novelist.³

In this study fiction has been divided into ten categories in order to obtain a more complete analysis of the fiction books read by the patrons of the library. These categories are (1) Contemporary Best Sellers, including those titles on the best seller lists in leading reviewing periodicals; (2) Best Sellers of yesteryear, containing titles such as Native

¹Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language (2d ed.; Springfield, Massachusetts: G. and C. Merriam, 1941), p. 940.

²Helen E. Haines, Living With Books (2d ed.; New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), p. 517.

³Ibid., p. 508.

Son by Richard Wright; (3) Classics, including works of established literary merit; (4) Mystery Stories; (5) Adventure Stories; (6) Historical Novels, including Biblical themes and biographical fiction; (7) Modern Light Romance; (8) Young Adult Fiction; (9) Juvenile Fiction, and (10) Others, including short stories and novels with little or no romantic themes. So that each category might be as mutually exclusive as possible, each title was assigned to a category and counted only once. For example, Kantor's Andersonville (an Historical Novel) and Wilson's Man in The Gray Flannel Suit (Modern Light Romance) despite their contents were counted only as Contemporary Best Sellers. For each unfamiliar title the Book Review Digest¹ or the Virginia Kirkus Bulletin² was consulted before the book was categorized.

Sex

There were 357 fiction books borrowed from the Hunter Street Library representing 30 per cent of the total number of loans made to its patrons during the course of this study. This pattern is again contrary to Berelson's findings that "almost two thirds of the borrowed books were fiction".³

Some 67 Contemporary Best Sellers representing the

1934- ¹Book Review Digest (New York: H. W. Wilson Company,).

²Virginia Kirkus Service, Bulletin (New York: The Service, 1955-).

³Berelson, op. cit., p. 128.

largest category of fiction books, were borrowed by 20 per cent of the total number of persons borrowing fiction (see Table 9). Waiting lists of 20 or more names are kept at the West Hunter Street Branch for such titles as Marjorie Morningstar (Wouk), indicating that "a large proportion of the circulation is composed of recently published titles, whose circulation might be even greater could the library provide sufficient copies to meet demands".¹

TABLE 9
CIRCULATION OF FICTION BY SEX OF BORROWER

Types of Fiction	Books Loaned		Number of Borrowers			
	No.	Per Cent	Women	Men	Both	Per Cent
Contemporary Best Sellers	67	18.7	35	11	46	20
Best Sellers of Yesteryear	12	5.8	7	5	12	5.0
Classics	8	2.0	5	3	8	4.0
Historical Novels	60	16.0	28	11	39	17.0
Mystery Stories	59	16.0	17	6	23	9.9
Adventure Stories	34	9.0	14	9	23	9.9
Modern Light Romance	63	17.6	29	6	35	15.0
Young Adult Fiction	26	7.2	17	5	22	9.5
Juvenile Fiction	7	1.9	4	0	4	1.7
Others	21	5.8	12	7	19	8.0
Total	357	100	168	63	231	100

Sixty Historical Novels, representing 16 per cent of all the fiction books borrowed were the next largest category. Modern Light Romance, representing 17.6 per cent of the total number of fiction books were borrowed by 15 per cent and

¹Ibid.

Classics accounted for only two per cent. Adventure Stories, representing nine per cent of the total number of books borrowed, were loaned to 9.9 per cent of the total number of borrowers, and Young Adult Fiction was borrowed by 9.5 per cent. This is a rather low percentage considering the large number of high school students that make up the library's clientele (see Table 9).

Fifty-nine Mystery Stories representing 16 per cent of the total number of books borrowed, were loaned to 23 people or 9.9 per cent of all borrowers. Short stories and novels without romantic themes represented 5.8 per cent of the total number of fiction books borrowed (see Table 9).

Occupations and Educational Status

Students accounted for 44.1 per cent of all the persons who borrowed fiction during the period covered by this study. This was the only group which borrowed all types of fiction books as outlined in this study. Students were the highest ranking borrowers of Classics, Historical Novels, Young Adult Fiction, and other types (see Table 10).

Persons in professional occupations represented 26 per cent of the total number of fiction borrowers. They were the highest ranking borrowers of Contemporary Best Sellers and Mystery Stories. Housewives accounted for 11.2 per cent of the borrowers. Skilled and semi-skilled workers represented 0.8 per cent and 0.4 per cent of all borrowers respectively. Clerical and sales workers representing 7.3 per cent of all persons who borrowed fiction, took out no Mystery Stories.

TABLE 10
BORROWERS OF FICTION BY OCCUPATION

Types of Fiction	Students	Professionals	Semi-Professionals	Housewives	Clerical and Sales	Personal-Service	Public-Service	Skilled	Semi-Skilled	Unskilled	Unknown	Total No. of Borrowers
Contemporary Best Sellers	13	18	1	7	4	1	--	--	--	1	1	46
Best Sellers of Yesteryear	9	1	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	1	--	12
Classics	4	--	--	--	2	--	--	--	1	1	--	8
Historical Novels	17	9	1	6	3	--	1	--	--	1	1	39
Mystery Stories	6	10	1	3	--	--	1	1	--	1	--	23
Adventure Stories	11	5	--	2	2	--	1	1	--	1	--	23
Modern Light Romance	16	8	--	5	3	--	1	--	--	1	1	35
Young Adult Fiction	13	4	1	1	1	1	--	--	--	1	--	22
Juvenile Fiction	3	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	4
Others	10	4	--	2	1	--	2	--	--	--	--	19
Total	102	59	4	26	17	3	6	2	1	8	3	231
Per Cent	44.1	26	1.7	11.2	7.3	1.3	2.5	.8	.4	3.4	1.3	100

High school and college students, and persons engaged in professional occupations requiring four years of college and beyond, ranked highest as borrowers of fiction. Housewives, clerical, and sales employees ranked third and fourth respectively in borrowing fiction. It is significant to observe that including semi-professionals, those persons in the remaining occupational brackets, though representative of good educational backgrounds, read few fiction books.

Most Popular Titles

The books most frequently borrowed by the patrons of the library during the four-week period were found in the Contemporary Best Seller category with the exception of Frank Yerby's books which were placed in the category of Historical Novels. To secure additional and/or needed copies of current best sellers, the Head Librarian of the West Hunter Street Branch uses the American Lending Library Company which is a lending service for libraries. This service has two advantages: it assures adequate copies of popular fiction (and non-fiction) books during the period of greatest demand, and it gives the librarian an opportunity to examine the books before deciding what titles should be purchased for the library's permanent collection.¹

The most popular titles represented by three or more loans per title are given below. The number in parenthesis beside the book title indicates the number of loans. So that

¹Interview with Mrs. A. McPheeters, Librarian, West Hunter Branch Public Library, Atlanta, Georgia, May 7, 1956.

a better cross section of borrowers might be shown under each title, the borrower's occupation is given as taken from his library registration card. The borrower's sex and occupational classification are shown in parenthesis.

Wouk, Majorie Morningstar (8)

- 1 Laundry worker (Unskilled, woman)
- 4 Teachers (Professional, women)
- 2 Students (women)
- 1 Social Worker (Professional, woman)

Kantor, Andersonville (6)

- 1 Unknown (woman)
- 3 Teachers (Professional, 2 women, 1 man)
- 1 Medical Technologist (Semi-professional, man)
- 1 Housewife

O'Hara, Ten North Frederick (5)

- 3 Teachers (Professional, 2 women, 1 man)
- 2 Secretaries (Clerical and Sales, women)

Basso, View From Pompey's Head (4)

- 1 Teacher (Professional, woman)
- 1 Housewife
- 2 Students (women)

Caldwell, Tender Victory (4)

- 1 Librarian (Professional, woman)
- 3 Teachers (Professional, women)

Hawley, Cash McCall (3)

- 1 Teacher (Professional, man)
- 2 Unknown (women)

Waugh, Island in the Sun (3)

- 1 Medical Technologist (Semi-Professional, man)
- 1 Student (man)
- 1 Pullman Porter (Personal-service, man)

The most widely read single author was Frank Yerby. Seven of his most popular books were borrowed, having a combined circulation of 16 titles. According to the studies

summarized by Mr. Berelson, there is a consistent decline in circulation as books grow older; however, this does not seem to hold true at the West Hunter Branch Library for Yerby's books.¹ The books that were borrowed are listed below. The publication date and number of loans are enclosed in parenthesis beside each title.

The Foxes of Harrow (1946 - 2)

2 College students (man and woman)

The Vixens (1947 - 2)

2 College students (man and woman)

Floodtide (1950 - 2)

1 College student (man)

1 Teacher (Professional, man)

Devil's Laughter (1953 - 1)

1 College student (man)

Bride of Liberty (1952 - 2)

1 College student (man)

1 High school student (woman)

Benton's Row (1954 - 3)

1 High school student (woman)

1 Unknown (woman)

1 Teacher (Professional, man)

Treasure of Pleasant Valley (1955 - 4)

1 Teacher (Professional, man)

2 Students (men)

1 Housewife

The library keeps at least two copies of each of Yerby's books in its permanent collection. Currently two

¹Berelson, op. cit., p. 62.

extra copies of Treasure of Pleasant Valley have been secured through the lending library service because of popular demand for this book. Other books by Yerby which the library has but which did not circulate during the period covered by this study are A Woman Called Fancy (1951), The Golden Hawk (1948), Pride's Castle (1949), and The Saracen Blade, a Novel (1952).

Summary

Contrary to the findings reported in related studies, the patrons of the West Hunter Branch Public Library borrow a comparatively small number of fiction books. The fiction which is borrowed probably serves mostly for entertainment purposes since it consists of Current Best Sellers, Historical Novels, Mystery Stories, and Modern Light Romance. Frank Yerby is the most widely read single author, especially among male college students and professional workers.

Chapter IV will discuss the non-fiction books borrowed by the adult patrons of the West Hunter Branch Public Library.

CHAPTER IV

THE NON-FICTION BORROWED BY THE ADULT PATRONS

As of December 31, 1955 the adult non-fiction collection of the West Hunter Branch Public Library contained 5,938 books, representing 48 per cent of the total number of books in the library (see Table 1). The non-fiction books are classified according to the Dewey Decimal Classification System and are not purchased for each of the ten divisions of the classification scheme in equal proportions, but are selected for each area according to the needs and requests of the patrons as determined by studies made by the Head Librarian.¹ At the present time the number of books in the social science area outrank all other books in the collection. Books on art and recreation and literature rank second and third respectively, with books on applied sciences ranking fourth. Books on linguistics rank lowest in the collection, with books on general works ranking second lowest numerically. Biography, classified separately from history and travel, ranks fifth in the number of books. Books on religion, history, philosophy, pure science, and travel rank sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth respectively in the number of books included in the library's non-fiction collection (see Table 11).

¹Interview with Mrs. McPheeters, op. cit.

TABLE 11

DIVISIONS OF THE NON-FICTION COLLECTION OF THE WEST
HUNTER BRANCH PUBLIC LIBRARY BY CLASS AND SIZE

Dewey Classification	Rank	Number of Books
Social Science	1	1,035
Fine Art	2	751
Literature	3	673
Applied Science	4	664
Biography	5	311
Religion	6	294
History	7	276
Philosophy	8	219
Science	9	213
Travel	10	153
General Works	11	63
Philology	12	50
Total		5,938

During the period covered by this study, 830 non-fiction books were borrowed from the library representing 70 per cent of the total number of books circulated. The high percentage of non-fiction books borrowed by the patrons of the West Hunter Branch Public Library support the hypotheses of both Berelson and Campbell; (1) "the proportion of school-related use of the public library by high school students is relatively high",¹ and (2) "in our society a high degree of formal schooling is correlated with both economic status and

¹Berelson, op. cit., p. 55.

occupation and both of these factors are related to how much people use the public library".¹

Applied science, with 119 books, accounted for 14.3 per cent of all the non-fiction books borrowed. Fifteen per cent of the total number of non-fiction borrowers used books in this area. Books on subjects such as medicine, public health, diseases, mechanical engineering, anatomy and physiology, childcare, and how-to-do-it books on television, radio, automobile, and home repairs were most frequently in demand (see Table 12).

Art and recreational books represented 13 per cent of the total number of non-fiction books circulated. The subjects most frequently borrowed in this category included those on gardening, sculpture, arts and crafts, painting, photography, music, amateur acting, stunts, dancing, and games and sports (see Table 12).

Philosophy and literature each accounted for 10 per cent of all the non-fiction circulated. Literature had the highest percentage of borrowers with 11.6 per cent, whereas 45 persons representing 10 per cent of the total number of borrowers checked out titles on philosophical subjects (see Table 12). The books most frequently borrowed on literary subjects were on general literature and literary composition, American and English poetry and drama, and a few books on

¹Angus Campbell and Charles A. Metzner, Public Use of The Library (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Institute for Social Research, 1950), p. 25.

TABLE 12

CIRCULATION OF NON-FICTION BY CLASS, SUBJECT AND SEX OF BORROWER

Non-Fiction	Books Borrowed		Borrowers			
	Number	Per Cent	Women	Men	Both	Per Cent
General Works	6	0.7	1	2	3	0.6
Philosophy and Psychology	83	10.0	26	19	45	10.0
Religion	28	3.3	8	7	15	3.2
Social Science	223	26.8	55	46	101	21.8
Philology	8	0.9	3	3	6	1.3
Science	58	7.0	18	15	33	7.0
Applied Science	119	14.3	37	31	68	15.0
Fine Arts	107	13.0	32	26	58	12.5
Literature	84	10.0	35	19	54	11.6
History and Travel	66	8.0	23	19	42	9.0
Biography	35	4.0	24	7	31	6.7
Juvenile Non-Fiction	13	2.0	5	1	6	1.3
Total	830	100	267	195	462	100

French, Latin, Greek, and Isreal poetry and drama. The titles most often circulated in the philosophical category dealt with the history of philosophy, metaphysics, infant and child psychology, philosophical systems, human behavior, and ethics.

History and travel, and biography accounted for eight per cent and four per cent respectively of all non-fiction books circulated. Nine per cent of the total number of borrowers checked out history and travel books, and 6.7 per cent checked out individual biographical works (see Table 12). The books borrowed on history and travel were concerned with geography and travel, ancient history, and recent titles on modern American, English, Russian, Chinese, African, Central American, and Hawaiian history. The biographical books most frequently borrowed were of the popular variety including titles as Many-Splendored Thing (Han), I'll Cry Tomorrow (Roth), His Eye Is On The Sparrow (Waters), and A Man Called White (White).

General works and books on languages were borrowed by 0.6 per cent and 1.3 per cent of all borrowers respectively. The titles most frequently called for in the former category dealt with reading and reading guidance, literary methods, and journalism. Books in the latter category were in the areas of German, Spanish, and English language dictionaries (see Table 12).

Juvenile non-fiction, dealing mostly with fairy tales and picture books of various states, were checked out by 1.3 per cent of the non-fiction borrowers. Religious books representing 3.3 per cent of all non-fiction books circulated, were

borrowed by 3.2 per cent of all borrowers. Most of these books dealt with hymnology, religious education, christian church history, the Bible, and non-christian religions.

The largest category of non-fiction books circulated was in the area of the social sciences. Some 223 books, representing 26.8 per cent of the non-fiction books checked out, were borrowed by 21.8 per cent of all borrowers of non-fiction books (see Table 12). The variety of subjects on which books were borrowed in this area was indicative of the occupational as well as the informational interests of the library's clients. The subjects covered were teaching and theories of sociology, political science, economics, constitutional law, governmental administration, juvenile delinquency, crime prevention and penology, all phases of education, family living, etiquette, and the treatment of women.

Sex

Women borrowers out-numbered men generally and in every subject area excepting education (370-379) and welfare and social problems (361-368). The largest number of both women and men borrowers withdrew books in the areas of education, political science, economics, and social welfare (See Table 13).

Occupations and Educational Status

Students accounted for 60.4 per cent of all non-fiction borrowers and professional workers were the second largest group accounting for 20 per cent. Together these two groups

were responsible for 80 per cent of all the non-fiction borrowed from the library. The housewife, who borrowed 23 books representing five per cent of all non-fiction circulated, ranked third highest and workers in the semi-professional, personal-service, unskilled, and unknown categories accounted for less than two per cent respectively of the total number of non-fiction borrowers (see Table 14).

TABLE 13

CIRCULATION OF SOCIAL SCIENCE BOOKS BY CLASSIFICATION
AND SEX OF BORROWERS

Subject Area	Total no. of books borrowed	Women	Men	Both
Sociology	8	4	1	5
Political Science, Negroes	40	17	13	30
Economics	18	11	5	16
Constitutional Law	1	--	1	1
Public Administration	13	4	1	5
Social Welfare	27	6	9	15
Education	104	12	24	36
Customs	12	9	1	10
Total	223	63	55	118

The groups borrowing the largest number of non-fiction books (again students and professionals) are indicative of the fact that persons with higher educational status tend to borrow more non-fiction books from the library. For the other occupational groups, the educational factor seemed to have no

TABLE 14

BORROWERS OF NON-FICTION BY OCCUPATION

Non-Fiction	Occupation											
	Students	Professionals	Semi-Professionals	Housewives	Clerical and Sales	Personal-Service	Public-Service	Skilled	Semi-Skilled	Unskilled	Unknown	Total Number of Borrowers
General Works	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	--	1	3
Philosophy and Psychology	29	6	1	2	2	--	1	--	1	2	1	45
Religion	8	2	--	--	--	--	1	--	1	2	1	15
Social Sciences	51	25	2	5	5	4	3	1	2	3	--	101
Linguistics	5	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	6
Pure Science	24	5	--	2	--	--	--	--	2	--	--	33
Applied Science	43	13	--	2	2	1	1	--	2	1	3	68
Art and Recreation	31	16	1	3	1	1	2	--	2	1	--	58
Literature	34	11	1	3	2	1	2	--	--	--	--	54
History and Travel	31	8	--	2	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	42
Biography	19	4	1	4	2	--	1	--	--	--	--	31
Juvenile Non-Fiction	4	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	1	6
Total	279	92	6	23	14	8	11	1	12	9	7	462
Per Cent	60.4	20	1.3	5	3.0	1.7	2.4	0.2	2.6	1.9	1.5	100

direct influence on the amount of neither fictional nor non-fictional books that they borrowed.

Summary

Seventy per cent of the books borrowed from the West Hunter Branch Public Library were non-fiction. The women patrons of the library borrowed more non-fiction than did the men. This is unusual as compared to the findings of other related studies.

The educational status of both men and women tend to make for a larger circulation of non-fiction books as observed in similar studies reported by Campbell and Berelson.

Students and persons employed in professional occupations accounted for most of the non-fiction books borrowed from the library during this study.

The largest number of these books was circulated in the social sciences with education and political science being the most popular subject areas. Applied science, art, and recreational books ranked second and third respectively as areas of popular interest. The subjects most frequently borrowed in the applied science area were medicine, public health, and how-to-do-it books relating to common mechanical instruments found in the home. In the arts and recreational area gardening, music, and games were the most popular subjects.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has sought to present a realistic description of the adults who use the West Hunter Branch Public Library in terms of their sex, occupations, ages, and educational status, and the specific kinds of books they withdrew from the library. It has been based on data taken from the library's circulation and registration records together with information secured by means of a brief questionnaire. Though limited in scope, it isolates one segment of the population and is termed "the library's public". Professional integrity and responsibility require that the public library study its patrons in order to make available the resources that are needed for the advancement of the well being of the individual and of society.

The West Hunter Branch Public Library is located in a predominantly Negro section in Atlanta, Georgia, and it in turn serves a homogeneous racial group. Most research studies present the conjecture that Negroes will use the public library in patterns similar to other racial groups, providing factors such as education and socio-economic status are equal. The findings in this study not only support this conjecture, but in some instances point out that the patrons of the West Hunter Library vary from it in a positive manner in their

selection of library book resources.

A review of the findings revealed in this study is indicative of several significant factors. Similar to most studies relative to the public library's clientele, more women than men use the West Hunter Branch Public Library. However, in related studies the reporters have concluded that more women use the library because they had more leisure time. This is not true of the women patrons of the West Hunter Library since only a small proportion indicated that they were housewives. The women borrowers of the library are employed outside the home mostly in professional positions such as teaching, nursing, and social work. In this respect the female clientele of the West Hunter Library is unique since it represents a more highly educated group of women than is reported in recent library surveys. The men patrons of the library reflect a wider range of educational and vocational experience than do the women patrons. The male clientele use the library mostly to obtain information on specific subjects of personal interest.

The relatively high educational level of the West Hunter Library's clientele is reflected in the large number of non-fiction books that are circulated. The major users of the library are high school and college students. Studies of school-related use of the public library would probably intensify this pattern. Next to students, professional workers ranked second in the borrowing of non-fiction from the library. In both of these groups there were more women borrowers than men.

Age as a factor does not play a prominent role in the patron's use of the library. Aside from students, who are for the most part in the 15-20 age bracket, persons from 21-44 use the library rather extensively as a source for securing books.

A relatively small amount of fiction was borrowed by the patrons of the library. Including the current best sellers, Frank Yerby is the most widely read single author of fictional books. Yerby's works according to sales reports are also very popular with readers other than the West Hunter Street Library's patrons. Over 70 per cent of the books circulated were non-fiction. In this area the social science books circulated most with education and political science being the most popular subjects.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE SUBMITTED TO ADULT PATRONS OF
THE WEST HUNTER BRANCH LIBRARY

Dear Patron:

We are trying to do a descriptive analysis of the clientele of the West Hunter Branch Public Library. Please fill in the information requested and return this questionnaire to the library when you return your book(s).

Thank you

-
1. What is your library registration number? _____
 2. How many grades of school did you finish? (Circle the highest grade completed.) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
 3. How many years of study beyond high school have you had? (Circle the correct number.) 1 2 3 4 5 6
 4. Do you have a college degree? Yes _____ No _____
 5. How many years of study beyond college have you had? (Circle the highest number of years completed.)
1 2 3 4 5 6
 6. What is your age?
15-20 _____ 21-29 _____ 30-44 _____ 45-59 _____ 60 or over _____

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